IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of: Acres, Wiebensen, Ginsburg

Serial No.   Unassigned

Filed: September 2, 1997   Group Art Unit: 3304

For: COMPUTER NETWORK FOR CONTROLLING AND MONITORING
               GAMING DEVICES

Box: Fee Amendments
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

In the Claims

Please add new claims 62 through 82 as follows:

62. (new)   A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

   selecting a plurality of the gaming devices;

   using the network to track the amount of money played on the selected gaming devices;

   allocating a predetermined percentage of the money played to a bonus pool;

   initiating a bonus period after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level;

   providing data establishing criteria to cause a bonus to be paid from the pool via

one of said selected gaming devices upon the occurrence of a predetermined event;

storing the data in a memory connected to a controller associated with only one of the gaming devices;

transmitting data indicative of gaming device activity from the gaming device to the controller;

transmitting a pay command from the controller to the gaming device upon the occurrence of the predetermined event only if a bonus period has been initiated; and

paying the bonus via the gaming device responsive to receipt of the pay command.

63. (new) The method of claim 62 wherein the predetermined event comprises a predetermined transaction at the gaming device.

64. (new) The method of claim 63 wherein said predetermined transaction comprises making a wager at the gaming device.

65. (new) The method of claim 63 wherein said predetermined transaction comprises a handle pull at the gaming device.

66. (new) The method of claim 62 wherein providing data establishing criteria to cause a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices upon the occurrence of a predetermined event comprises providing data causing a bonus to be paid from the pool via one of said selected gaming devices only if predetermined minimum gaming device play is achieved.

67. (new) The method of claim 62 wherein said predetermined event comprises transmission of a pay command from the host computer to the controller.

68. (new)A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

establishing a predetermined minimum level of gaming device play;

detecting wagers made at each of the gaming devices; and

initiating a bonus period during which gaming devices which exceed the minimum level are eligible to be paid a bonus responsive to the occurrence of a predetermined event and gaming devices which do not exceed the minimum level are not eligible for such a bonus.

69. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein initiating a bonus period comprises transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

70. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises:

using the network to track the amount of money played on the selected gaming devices; and

allocating a predetermined percentage played to a bonus pool.

71. (new) The method of claim 70 wherein the bonus period is initiated after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level.

72. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein the predetermined event comprises a jackpot paid at one of the gaming devices.

73. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein the predetermined event comprises random selection of one of the gaming devices.

74. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises paying a bonus to a gaming device responsive to a pay command transmitted from the host computer over the network.

75. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further comprises:

storing data defining the predetermined minimum level of gaming device play in a memory at the gaming device; and

comparing the level of gaming device play with the stored data.

76. (new) The method of claim 68 wherein said method further includes indicating to a player of the gaming device whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

77. (new) A method of operating gaming devices configured to play a preselected game interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

permitting players to play the preselected game at the gaming devices;

paying to each device in accordance with a payout table stored in the device after each game;

monitoring the activity of the gaming devices;

detecting the amount of money played on the gaming devices;

allocating a predetermined percentage of the money played to a bonus pool;

determining the level of the bonus pool;

initiating a bonus period after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level;

permitting continued pay of the preselected game at the gaming devices;

continuing to pay to each device in accordance with the payout table after initiating the bonus period; and

paying a bonus to at least one of the gaming devices responsive to the occurrence of a predetermined event after initiating the bonus period.

78. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further comprises:

detecting the amount of money paid as bonuses on the gaming devices;

modifying the bonus pool by the amount of money paid as bonuses;

determining the level of the bonus pool; and

deactivating the bonus payout table in the gaming device after the bonus pool level falls below a turn-off level.

4

79. (new) The method of claim 78 wherein said turn-on level is above said turn-off level.

80. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein initiating a bonus period comprises transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

81. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein the predetermined event comprises a jackpot paid at one of the gaming devices.

82. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein the predetermined event comprises random selection of one of the gaming devices.

83. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein paying a bonus to at least one of the gaming devices comprises paying a bonus to a gaming device responsive to a pay command transmitted from the host computer over the network.

84. 81. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further includes:
    defining bonus eligibility criteria; and
    paying a bonus only to gaming devices which meet the criteria.

85. 82. (new) The method of claim 84 81 wherein the criteria comprises a minimum level of gaming device play.

86. 83. (new) The method of claim 85 82 wherein said method further comprises indicating to the player of the gaming device whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

87. 84. (new) The method of claim 77 wherein said method further comprises:
    determining the level of play for a gaming device;
    preventing a bonus from being paid to the gaming device when the level of play falls below a predetermined level.
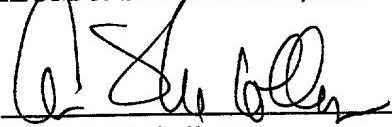
5

Remarks

Please examine the application as amended.

Respectfully submitted,

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